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IN FORTNIGHTLY PARTS

The Ancestral Trail

AN EPIC STORY OF MYTHS, MAGIC AND MONSTERS

20 Spector, Keeper of the Ice Kingdom

Trapped in the Wastes of Frigoria

Julek Heller

UK £1.75 IR £1.75

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From a story by Frank Graves

On the Twentieth Day . . .

Sear of ice chill best is fled
By cutting that which in a head
Is single, cold and seeing all,
The eye that holds you in its thrall.
A blinding arc destroys the past,
Then they start the trip at last.
Beware at length a fall of snow,
Another city? Far to go.

The ice creaked closer on either side. Suddenly the dolphin leaped out of the water and gave a mighty flick of his tail, catapulting the trio on to the ice. Then Doonar sped down between icy cliffs to the clear sea below and began to work his way under the pack ice to the safety of the open ocean.

The three picked themselves up from the hard ground. The waterways through which they had travelled were now frozen over, and the pack ice stretched cold and glittering in all directions.

City of Ice

Richard took out the Path Finder. The arrow pointed towards the cliffs that loomed in the distance. The journey was harder than any of them expected. The pack ice was a tortured mass of knobbly outcrops and sudden crevasses.

Despite Doonar's oil, they were soon shivering as cold seeped into their bones.

By the time the three reached the cliffs, they were exhausted. With a supreme effort they managed to clamber up the rugged heights to the plateau at the top.

Before them, rising like a ship from the flatness, was Frigoria. Shimmering walls of ice glinted in the sunlight and spires rose to a clear blue sky. It was like walking into a fairy tale, except for one, ominous reminder of the Evil One's presence.

Arch of horror

Set into the walls was a monumental arch. It was built of gritty ice that contained vague, twisted lumps. As the three got nearer, the lumps turned into distinguishable creatures. Here they made out a tail, there an eye. Cold mouths gaped wide in silent fear. Either side of the arch, dolphins were frozen in agony, their faces grey masks of terror.

In silence, the three tramped through the arch into the city of ice. Streets stretched out in every direction, straight and empty. Where the rooftops had shone in the sun, these pristine avenues were cold, dark and unwelcoming. Icy slabs of pavement led like blue slides into the gloom as the three stepped into the stark environment.

The cold was biting deep into their bones and already Melek was beginning to stumble with fatigue. Richard was about to suggest they rest for a while, when Melek suddenly slumped down to the floor.

One-eyed giant

Richard grabbed Melek by the collar and tried to haul him up. Then a shadow fell over him, obliterating what little light came into that dreary street. Richard looked up and gasped.

Above them loomed a giant. He was thickly bearded, and clad in rough woollen clothes to insulate him against the cold. In the middle of his forehead sat a single, blue-grey eye that stared expressionlessly at Richard.

"Welcome to Frigoria," the creature boomed. He advanced towards the shivering trio, then scooped them up into his massive arms. Numbed by the cold and paralysed by terror, the three lost consciousness.

When Richard came to, he found himself lying in a vast chamber of ice.

At the far end, on a silvery throne, sat the giant, his single eye staring piercingly out of its rubbery socket.

Richard was so hypnotized by the eye that it took a moment for him to realize that he was no longer cold. In fact he felt warmer than he had for a long time. Looking down, he saw that he was wrapped in a hairy blanket made of the same material as the giant's clothes. Next to him lay Orkan and Melek, both awake and similarly swathed.

Ever-wakeful eye

"Who are you?" Richard asked.

"I am Spector, Keeper of the Ice Kingdom," the giant replied in a deep, gravelly voice. "This is my palace. Enjoy it before I take you to the Evil One."

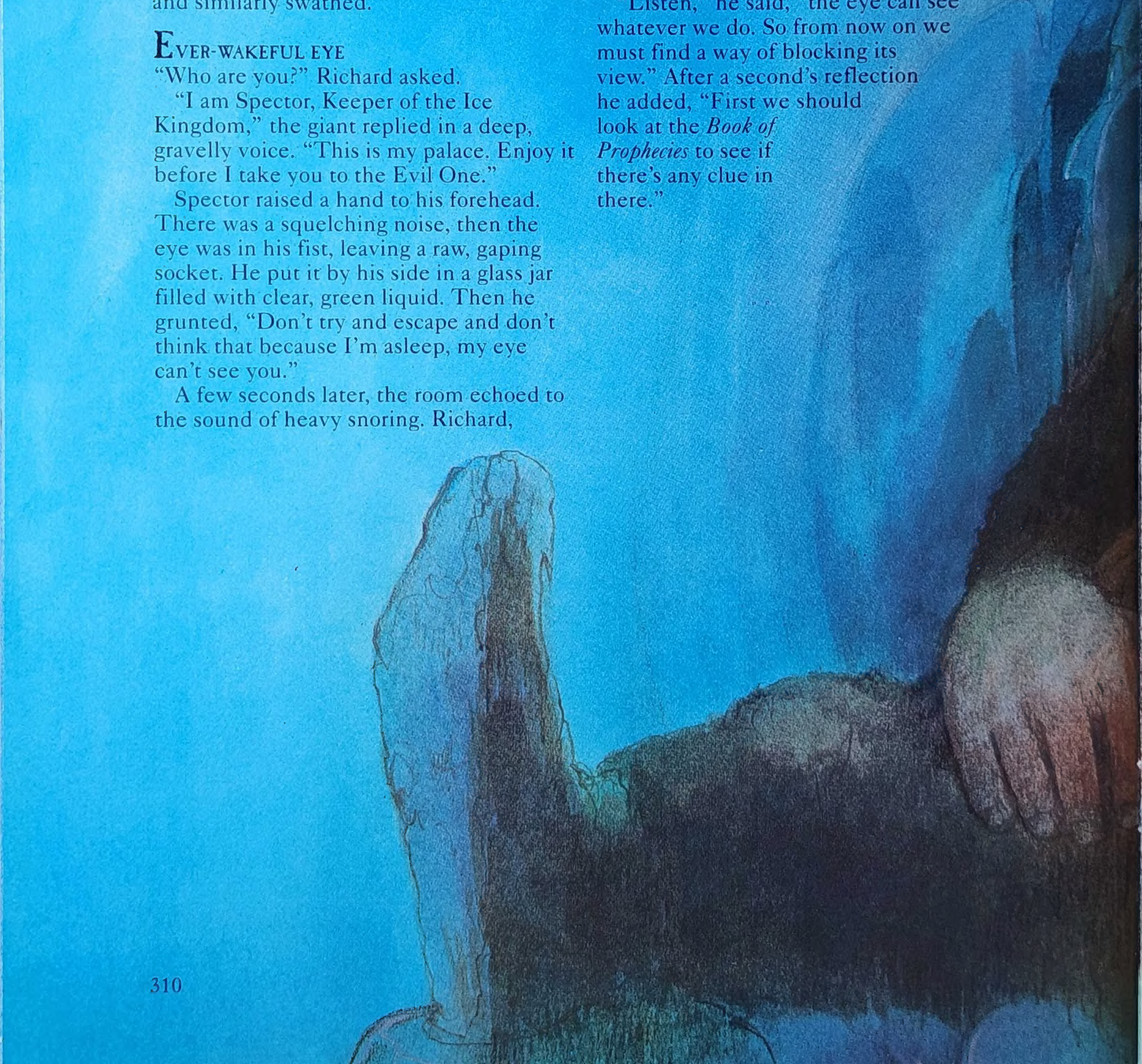
Spector raised a hand to his forehead. There was a squelching noise, then the eye was in his fist, leaving a raw, gaping socket. He put it by his side in a glass jar filled with clear, green liquid. Then he grunted, "Don't try and escape and don't think that because I'm asleep, my eye can't see you."

A few seconds later, the room echoed to the sound of heavy snoring. Richard, Orkan and Melek stared at the eye as it floated in its green fluid. The eye stared, unblinking, back at them. If they moved, it followed them, swivelling in its container.

For an experiment Richard took a few steps towards it. Instantly Spector's hand twitched out towards the jar. As Richard retreated, so did the giant's hand.

Richard turned his back on the eye and motioned Melek and Orkan towards him.

"Listen," he said, "the eye can see whatever we do. So from now on we must find a way of blocking its view." After a second's reflection he added, "First we should look at the *Book of Prophecies* to see if there's any clue in there."



Melek unstrapped the book and started to turn the ancient pages.

"Face the other way," Richard warned the little scribe quickly. "We mustn't let the eye see the text."

The three scanned the verse while Spector's eye bobbed watchfully in its jar.

"We have to get the eye," Richard said. Then he read the verse aloud to the others.

"Sear of ice chill best is fled
By cutting that which in a head
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The eye that holds you in its thrall.
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"How?" Melek asked as he closed the book. "We can't get near it without Spector waking up."

"Both of you huddle closer, as if we're in deep conversation," Richard whispered after a moment's thought. "I want to be completely hidden from that eye."

Orkan and Melek moved round so that the eye could see nothing but their backs. When Richard was sure he was out of sight, he raised the hood of Golan's tunic and shimmered into invisibility.

Richard moved towards the jar. The first

few steps were nerve-racking. He expected Spector to jump forward at any moment, but his plan was working. The eye stared straight through him as he crept closer and closer to the jar.

Shrivelling eye

Soon Richard was standing right by the throne. He drew a deep breath and lifted the container. Then he lost his grip. The jar flew out of Richard's grasp. As the lid bounced loose, a thick gel slopped on to the ice and the eye rolled away.

Spector bent over in agony, both hands clutched to his forehead. The jelly-like liquid was sizzling, melting a channel into the ice as it spread. Without its protective liquid, the eye had begun to shrivel.

Richard pulled back the hood of his tunic. "Let's go!" he shouted to the others.

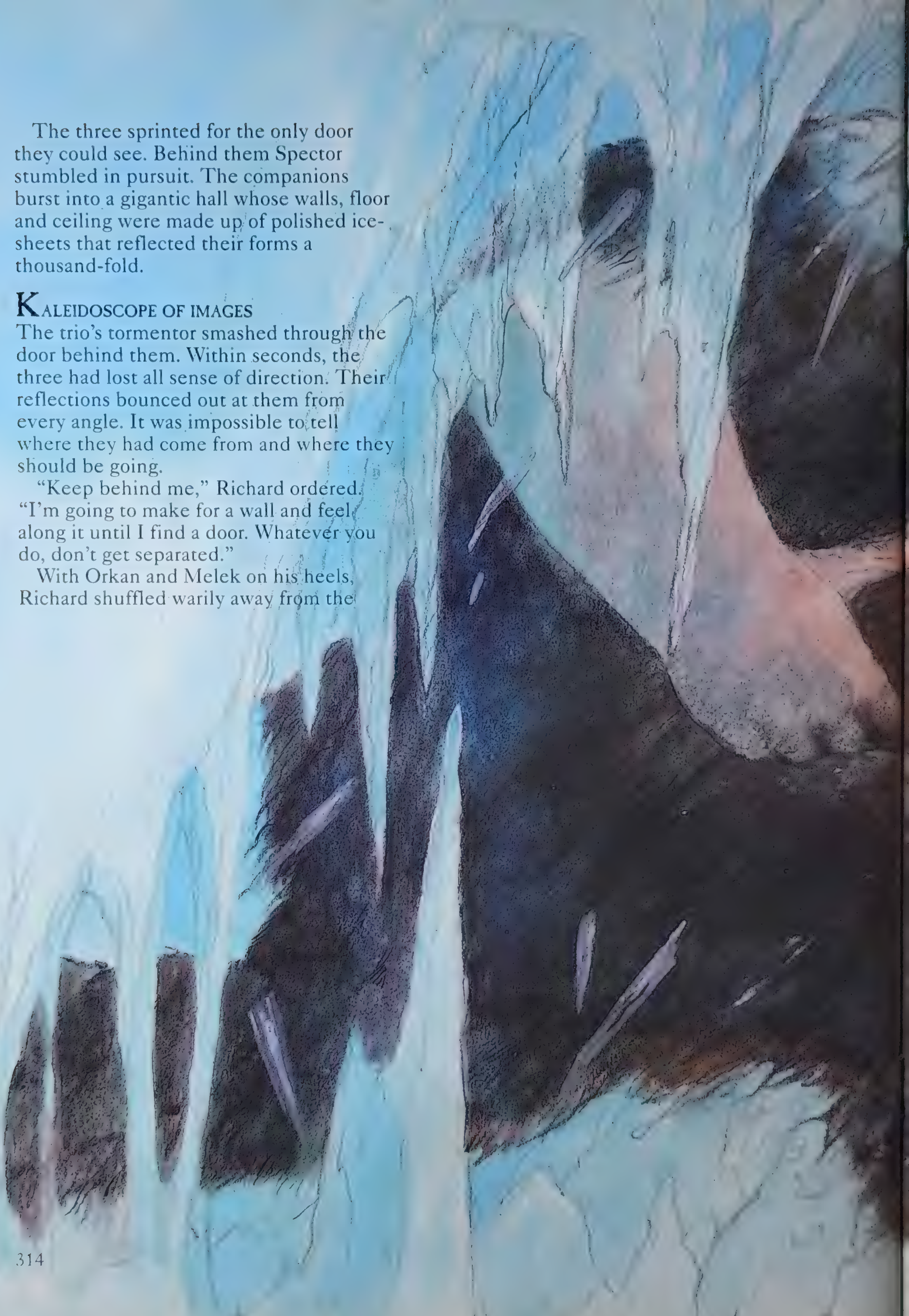
The three sprinted for the only door they could see. Behind them Spector stumbled in pursuit. The companions burst into a gigantic hall whose walls, floor and ceiling were made up of polished ice-sheets that reflected their forms a thousand-fold.

Kaleidoscope of images

The trio's tormentor smashed through the door behind them. Within seconds, the three had lost all sense of direction. Their reflections bounced out at them from every angle. It was impossible to tell where they had come from and where they should be going.

"Keep behind me," Richard ordered. "I'm going to make for a wall and feel along it until I find a door. Whatever you do, don't get separated."

With Orkan and Melek on his heels, Richard shuffled warily away from the



centre of the hall. As he did so, the reflections shifted as if they were trapped in an enormous kaleidoscope.

Soon Richard's outstretched hand encountered the burning chill of ice. At last he had reached a wall.

Escape tunnel

Richard fumbled along it as fast as he could, his fingers becoming numb. He wondered how long he could keep it up. Suddenly his hand met empty space. He stepped into the opening.

It was a doorway. His reflection greeted him on all sides save one, where he saw a dark, rough-hewn corridor. He headed for it and felt rough stone beneath his fingertips. The three broke into a run. Suddenly the tunnel opened on to a dark street. They had escaped!

The three darted into the dark city, skidding and sliding on icy pavements. They had reached another arch with sea mammals trapped inside, just like the one they had first entered, when they heard a terrifying roar of anger.

Spector had emerged from the palace and was striding after them.

"I've got an idea," Orkan said. "You two go through. Melek, give me your rope."

He seized the rope, tied a loop in one end and threw it up over one of the battlements that lined the city wall. Then he scrambled up and positioned himself atop the arch. He drew his sword, repositioned the rope on a battlement directly in the centre of the arch. Then he squatted and waited.

Conquering the giant

The sound of their voices gave Spector both speed and direction. He strode towards them, his arms outstretched, until they made contact with the arch. He pounded it with his fists, sending shockwaves through the ice, then he stooped under the arch.

With one end of the rope looped round the battlement, and the other tied round his waist, Orkan launched himself into space. He swung in a perfect arc towards the giant's face and his sword struck just where he had planned – in Spector's eyeless socket.

The blade plunged deep into tender flesh, then withdrew. The dead giant toppled slowly backwards.

"Look what's happening to the city," Melek cried.

With Spector's death, Frigoria had started to melt fast, as though a gigantic furnace had been lit beneath it. The tall spires dissolved into shapeless lumps. Within a short time, the melt-down had spread to engulf the walls and the archway of imprisoned sea mammals.

Swimming free

Richard, Orkan and Melek watched in joy as the animals plunged into the pool of water that was now all that remained of Spector's domain. Whale song mixed with the chatter of dolphins as the creatures celebrated their freedom.

"If I'm right," Melek said, "this melt-down will have gone right through the ice-cap. The sea mammals will be able to swim out to open water and join up with Golan's forces."

Sure enough, after a few moments of boisterous tail-slapping and water-jetting, the mammals disappeared from view. All that remained on the lake was the bobbing carcass of Spector himself.

Richard checked the Path Finder and the three moved off in the direction it indicated.

For a while, the going was easy. The sun shone. The ground was hard and flat, the air clear. Soon, in the distance, they made out a mountain range. They trampled over the light snow with renewed vigour, their eyes fixed only on the clear, white mountains ahead.

Lost in the storm

When the blizzard struck them from behind, the three were completely unprepared. A wall of freezing darkness hit them, shot through with lightning streaks and driven onwards by a fearsome gale.

At a stroke, visibility dropped to nil. The blue sky was suddenly obscured by a cloud of pitch darkness. The temperature plummeted and ice particles lashed against their faces.

"Keep close!" Richard shouted.

Already the other two were lost from sight or sound. He was stranded in a blizzard of snow and ice that encompassed his entire universe. Covering his face as best he could, he plunged alone into the storm.

Shoomi's Sanctuary

Come into this ancient domain and use your powers of observation to find . . .

Shoomi and Shoobi

Look out for these friendly little creatures again in one of the illustrations in this issue.

In issue 19, they were in fish masks on page 303.

Spector's Eye

Can you find the giant's eye hidden in one of the illustrations in less than three minutes?

In issue 19, Nemis's Trident was on page 294.

Monsters and Magic

Read about Cyclops and Argus on Morbane's story cards and decide who Spector is based on.

In issue 19, Nemis was based on the Sirens.

Puzzle Map

Cut out the two puzzle pieces and fit them on to your Ancestral World map poster.

Power of Evil

Cut out the letter blocks, and wait for the clue that will reveal the secret of the Evil One's power.

NB The competition will be open to residents of UK and Eire only.

Fighting Forces

A game for two using all Monster Might Cards

Aim

To gain 300 points by accumulating enough winning sets (2 cards).

Scoring

Score 5 points for each set won.
50 points for winning all 5 sets in a round.

Before you start

Players choose a card. Higher number deals first.

How to Play

1 Deal 5 cards each. Place remaining cards face-down to form Reserve Forces. Turn over top card*. This is the Victory suit in this round and can overpower any other suit.

**If the card is 13, Dealer stores a bonus 5 points. If it is a Pod card, Dealer chooses Victory suit.*

2 Opponent looks at his cards. He can keep them all and shout Fight! to continue play. Or call Reserves! and swap some cards with an equal number from the Reserve Forces.

A good hand will include Victory suit cards, and high-numbered cards of the other suits.

3 Dealer looks at his cards, and decides whether to force a Fight! or, accept the call for Reserves! when both players can swap 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 cards for an equal number from the Reserve Forces stack.

4 Opponent lays one of his cards.

5 Dealer must follow this suit if he can. If he lays a higher number he wins the set, otherwise Opponent wins the set. Winner scores 5 points.

If Dealer cannot follow suit, he can use a Victory suit or a Pod card to win. Otherwise Dealer lays a low-numbered card and Opponent wins the set.

6 Continue the round with players taking turns to lay the first card until all sets are won.

7 Play continues with players taking turn to deal a new round until one player scores 300 points.

To exercise skill and judgement further, both players can have the option of calling for Reserves! up to three times each.

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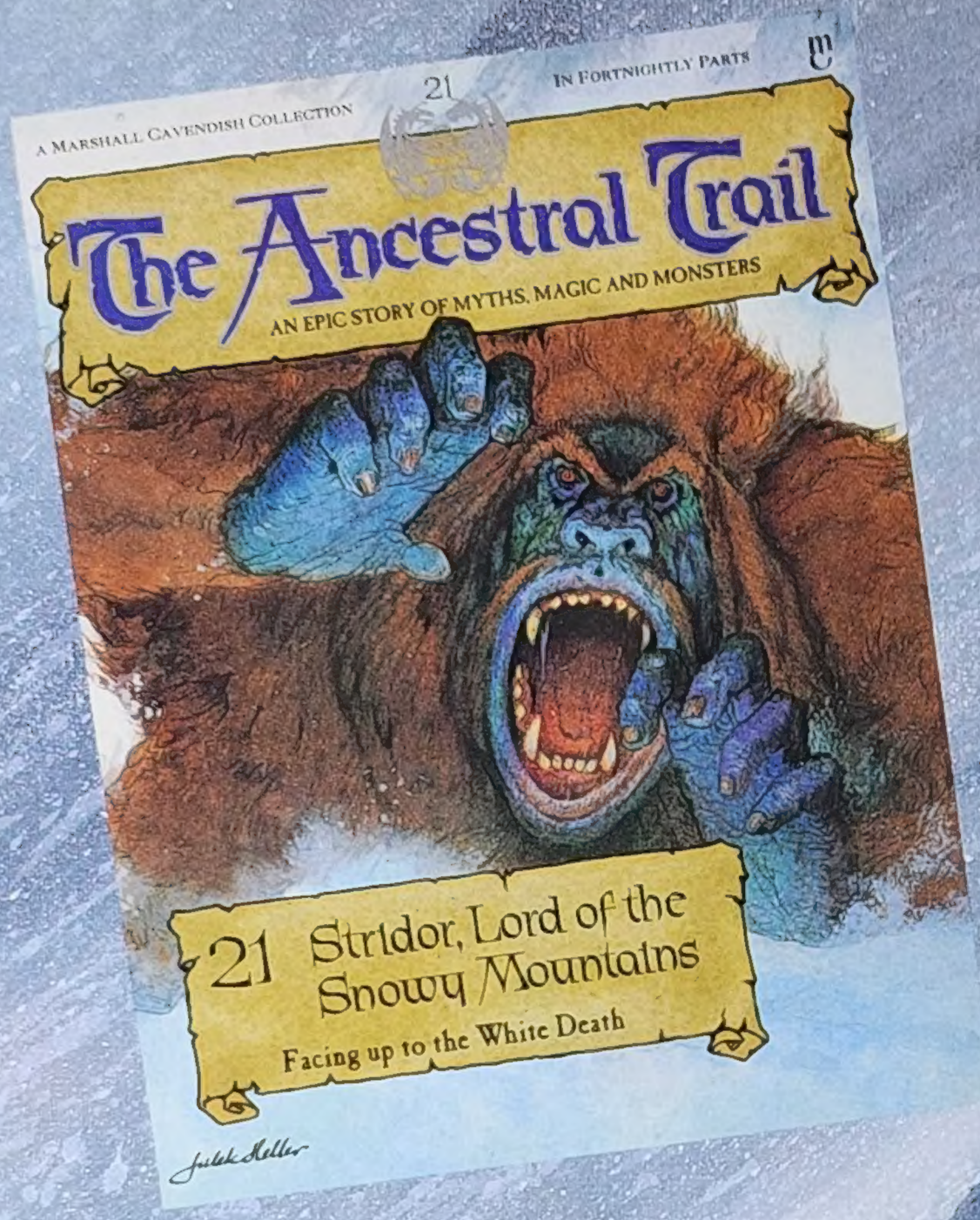
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In Issue 21

Stridor, Lord of the Snowy Mountains

The trio are battered by freezing winds and blizzards as they fight their way across the Snowy Mountains. Not only must they survive these harsh extremes, but also avoid a confrontation with the lord of this dangerous domain.

plus

- Morbane tells us about Atlas and Big Foot – two creatures of enormous height and legendary strength.
- More tokens and a location recorder for **The Ancestral Trail** role-playing game.

Coming in Issue 22

Zyton and the Curse of Loktar

Melek goes missing and Richard and Orkan must enter the Great Pyramid of Loktar alone. Will they find the pod and escape the ancient curse?

plus

From Morbane – two stories about creatures that seem invincible • More pieces for the Ancestral World puzzle map.

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